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Abstracts

Education symposium

Program/Abstract # 51**Talking about and teaching evolution**

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Did the universe begin out of nothing? Did it have a beginning at all? Is there anything special about human existence? Is there a God? Even now, pairing off scientists and religious believers to answer such questions is often billed as a debate: science *versus* religion, as if the two were in a death match. I don't think there *should* be a debate, in the sense that only one side can come out the winner. Dialogue is more productive. And yet, especially in the United States, the murky waters of the rapport between religion and science never seem to clear. There appears to exist a nagging fear among many religious people that a universe, which science has established as evolving for 13.7×10^9 years since the Big Bang and in which life, beginning in its most primitive forms at about 12×10^9 years from the Big Bang, evolved through a process of random genetic mutations and natural selection, escapes God's dominion. That fear is groundless. Science is completely neutral with respect to philosophical or theological implications which may be drawn from its conclusions. For one to deny the best of today's science on religious grounds is to live in that groundless fear just mentioned.

doi:[10.1016/j.ydbio.2009.05.063](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ydbio.2009.05.063)**Program/Abstract # 52****Talking about science/evolution to a fellow bus rider**Steven A. Farber^a, Diana K. Darnell^b, George V. Coyne^c^aDepartment of Embryology, Carnegie Institution for Science, Baltimore, MD, USA^bDepartment of Cell Biology & Anatomy, U of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, USA^cDepartment of Planetary Sciences, U of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, USA

In numerous studies of the public's trust in institutional leadership, the scientific community ranks in the top three most trust worthy institutions (usually right below the Military) and just above the medical establishment (data reviewed in the NSF Science and Engineering Indicators 2008). Despite this high degree of trust, the public consistently reports that scientists need to do a better job communicating their science. A recent survey of public attitudes of science in the UK (Research Council Report—Public Attitudes to Science 2008) found 87% of those asked agree with the statement that, "Those who regulate science need to communicate with the public." Consistent with this finding, 77% "would like more scientists to spend more time than they do discussing the implications of their research with the general public." Given this state of affairs, this Education Symposium will include a Keynote Address by Dr. Coyne who is not only a visiting professor in the Department of Planetary Sciences at the University of Arizona but also a Jesuit Priest giving him a unique perspective on a host of issues that, for some, pits scientific ideas and practice against religious beliefs. In recent years these issues are especially relevant surrounding the public's attitudes towards evolution. A major goal of the symposium is to review easily understood examples of evolution that we can communicate to non-scientists to capture their imagination and thereby create seeds for attitude change.

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